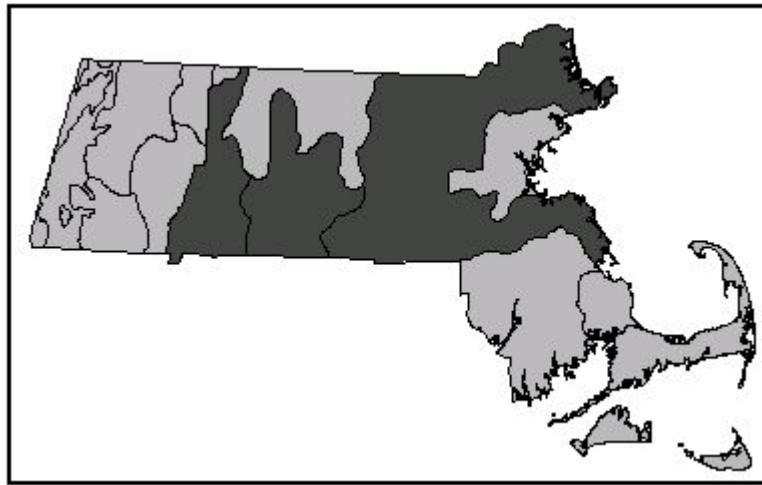


**Community Name:** **HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY THICKET**  
**Community ELCODE:** CP2B0C2000  
**SRANK:** S4



**Concept:** Acidic peatlands dominated by dense highbush blueberry bushes on hummocky sphagnum moss.

**Environmental setting:** Highbush blueberry thickets appear to occur in areas that are wetter and more mineral- enriched than dwarf shrub level bog communities. Tall shrub thickets are generally flooded in spring and early summer, but water levels drop below the soil surface by late summer or early fall. The sphagnum mat is variable; it can be patchy and unstable or thick and stable. Many of the known examples occupy kettleholes.

**Vegetation Description:** Highbush blueberry thickets are tall shrub peatlands dominated by dense highbush blueberries (*Vaccinium corymbosum*). Swamp azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*) is a common associate, and typical short shrubs include sheep laurel (*K. angustifolia*), leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), and huckleberry (*Gaylussacia dumosa*). Sphagnum moss can form a continuous and stable mat beneath the shrubs, or it can be localized on small hummocks at the base of the shrubs.

**Associations:** One association has been described in Massachusetts: the *Vaccinium corymbosum*-*Rhododendron viscosum* tall shrub bog and bog border association [TYPE A in Kearsley, 1999c].

**Habitat values for Associated Fauna:** Moats of wet, ponded areas associated with highbush blueberry thickets can function as vernal pool habitat if water remains standing for 2-3 months; these areas provide important amphibian breeding habitat.

**Associated rare plants:**

|                       |                             |      |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| MAIANTHEMUM TRIFOLIUM | THREE-LEAVED SOLOMON'S SEAL | - WL |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------|

**Associated rare animals:**

|                          |                         |    |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----|
| AMBYSTOMA JEFFERSONIANUM | JEFFERSON SALAMANDER    | SC |
| AMBYSTOMA LATERALE       | BLUE-SPOTTED SALAMANDER | SC |
| CLEMMYS GUTTATA          | SPOTTED TURTLE          | SC |
| HEMIDACTYLIUM SCUTATUM   | FOUR-TOED SALAMANDER    | SC |

**Examples with Public Access:** several kettlehole highbush blueberry thickets in Belchertown.

**Threats:** Hydrologic alterations and nutrient enrichment from road and lawn runoff may impact this community. More information is needed.

**Management needs:** More information is needed.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

**Synonyms**

**USNVC/TNC:** Vaccinium corymbosum/Sphagnum spp. shrubland [CEGL006190].

**MA [old name]:** Not described.

**ME:** similar to Peatland lagg community.

**VT:** not described or included in Shrub swamp.

**NH:** included within Shrub swamp.

**NY:** Highbush blueberry bog thicket.

**CT:** Vaccinium corymbosum-Rhododendron viscosum community; Vaccinium corymbosum/Osmunda cinnamomea community.

**RI:** Part of scrub/shrub wetland.

**Golet & Larson, 1974:**

**Other:**

**Author:** J. Kearsley **Date:** 7/21/99